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HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

IN CHARGE OF

MARY M. RIDDLE, R.N.

In considering the outlook for hospital work in the coming year, one is prone to question the signs of promise. Have the American hospitals reached such a high degree of development that administrators can afford to sit supinely by, awaiting an order in the shape of an epidemic or catastrophe for increased efficiency, or shall there be such a close and continuous study of hospital problems that it shall be really an applied science that shall enable its students to foresee needs and means of meeting them before they reach the stage of demands?

It has come to pass within the last twenty-five years that women have taken rank as hospital superintendents. Their success has been due in great measure to their constancy and ability to concentrate upon details, added to their preparedness for the work undertaken. Since so many of our present day institutions are superintended by women nurses it is fitting that our own AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING should have a department devoted wholly to hospital administration. The department can be made useful and interesting by the combined effort of hospital superintendents and JOURNAL editors, therefore it is hoped that each superintendent of a hospital will be willing to transmit any items regarding new forms of work, newly discovered economies of work and time and whatever else of like import that may be of benefit to JOURNAL readers. If a superintendent in a remote part of the country could avail herself of the privilege of visiting other institutions, this department might not be so essential, but her very remoteness precludes the possibility of such advantages and the information must be tendered her in a more attainable form.

There must be much of interest to be gathered and forwarded concerning the construction of new hospitals or new additions to old ones. The average superintendent is called upon at some time in her working life to assist in formulating plans for new buildings, hence any information which she can secure will be most helpful. It rarely occurs that a new building is beyond criticism and who is so well fitted to criticise as the woman who manages the work done therein! The remark, "this building was planned and constructed without the aid of a woman," is not infrequently heard and evidences of its justice are

clearly noted in the absence of the most ordinary conveniences as well as in the presence of those conditions which tend to increase labor rather than conform to the demand of the times and promote its economy. Again, a new building may have features that are most desirable and worthy of imitation elsewhere and, for the sake of any hospital contemplating changes, they should be described and the description sent broadcast. Therefore the discussion of this one topic should be productive of much assistance.

The older hospital buildings are replete in conditions which tend to the duplication of work. Some of these are the result of changes due to the differences in the necessary care of hospital patients today. For instance, twenty-five years ago nurses were not required to boil or sterilize the ward instruments for the surgeon when he came to do the morning dressings; today such requirements are strict and must be met, even when the instruments must be boiled in the serving room in the midst of serving the patients' dinners. Diets and instruments appear in such close proximity that the appetites of the patients would doubtless disappear if they were apprised of the fact. How is this condition met? There must be inventive minds that have discovered ways to remedy such a condition. Perhaps one has done so by the employment of an appliance of her own invention, possibly by the use of a most unpretentious contrivance that she found on the market. By reason of their very simplicity such methods and devices will be passed over by the users as "not worth the telling," when in reality they are just what some earnest worker is seeking and sending word of them to the hospital department of the JOURNAL will be conferring a distinct blessing upon some one.

By way of digression it may be said that hospital workers and especially nurses are too reticent regarding accomplishments, too prone to consider as "nothing" that which is of real moment, and they very often let slip those golden opportunities which came their way but once. If this department can be the means of overcoming this tendency in nurses it shall not have existed in vain. It is not looking wholly for that which is new, not for methods that are eloquent, but for facts and useful knowledge, however expressed, if timely.

Hospitals should be models of sanitation and great improvements have been made in this respect, as may be proved, for instance, if one considers the methods of caring for floors twenty-five years ago and compares it with the modern way. There must be many who can recall the scrubbers' brigade that bore down upon the hospital ward at the the most inconvenient hour in those days and proceeded to "lay the dust" by such a copious application of soap and water that floors and

underpinning were alike saturated and the ward was left reeking with the fumes of strong soap. Floors were made rough and moist and became a fallow field for the propagation of any germs already in the ward or that might be brought in by the chance visitor.

Today it is thought that floors are best if made of some non-absorbent material, but what are the non-absorbents and how are they cared for? Of the different kinds, which are the best, and, all things considered, the cheapest? It is true that architects and others can recommend "good floors" but how have they proved their goodness and practical use? What proportion of nurses have contracted flat-foot by walking upon them for eight to thirteen hours per day? Verily the discussion of floors should be a productive one and there must be many who are eminently qualified by experience to lead it and carry it on.

Training schools for nurses are giving much attention to the housing, feeding, relieving and otherwise caring for graduate nurses that come to the hospital to act as specials for patients needing or wishing particular care. It has become the general belief among certain patients and their physicians that a very ill patient should be cared for by a nurse who gives him her undivided attention. This custom has brought into practice the employment, by hospitals, of very many graduate nurses. The growth of the custom was so rapid and its increase so steady that to many hospitals it was in the nature of an emergency which they were unprepared to meet. It is right that the schools of nursing should be interested in solving the problem, but the hospital has in this question a very distinct duty which it will do well to consider, keeping in mind the best interests of patient, nurse and hospital. There must be hospitals that have evolved some good scheme for meeting this changed condition in hospital and training school administration and it must also be true that they would be willing to set it forth in the pages of this department of the JOURNAL. Happy that hospital which has among its managers and trustees those who can sympathize with the graduate nurse in this comparatively new situation, new at least in regard to its permanency, and who are willing to exercise their powers for improving it.

How far shall the hospital of any community be considered the health centre of that community? It is easy to conceive an increased usefulness for the institution willing to occupy such a position. A good deal is heard about public schools being social centres, even in the most remote places with a widely scattered population, and if schools are to be social centres then why may not hospitals be health centres? By this, is meant the centralization within the hospital of those agencies

which do much to promote the public health and welfare. Rarely, if ever, will it be the headquarters of the board of health, but it can work in such harmony and sympathy with the health officials that the one may augment the efforts of the other.

There are ways in which the hospital may be the health centre. For instance, if there is to be social service within the community, let it emanate from the hospital. If the hospital is one of the so-called smaller ones, serving a community of like proportions, let the district or visiting nursing be done from there and let the hospital keep in close touch with the school nurse and her work, rendering her such aid as will enable it to take rank as an important factor in her success. Has this been worked out anywhere? How? When? Will not some one give information to the department regarding it?

If the subject has not yet received consideration, would it not seem wise and timely that it should? If by such means the scope and usefulness of the hospital should be increased, can it be omitted with safety in these days of stress and advocacy of preparedness? Whatever adds to usefulness adds to strength, and additional strength means preparation for the future. A few hospitals have shown their willingness to be thus considered as may be witnessed by that institution which has given space and opportunity for hundreds of women to assemble and prepare dressings and other necessities incurred by the European war; or those less pretentious institutions that assist smaller bodies in the same way for the same purpose.

That old use of the hospital in preventing and treating epidemics continues to be an interesting study and could be made to yield much of interest to every hospital worker.

In the administration of the commercial business of the hospital, many unsolved problems remain. How many have decided upon a satisfactory course regarding the cases that come under the Employers' Liability Act or the Employers' Insurance or the State Charities? How many hospitals are absolutely sure that they and all their representatives understand and keep all the laws of the land? What can be said of the laws regarding "ophthalmia neonatorum," their necessity, the strictness with they are obeyed and some of the results which have followed? Have all hospitals kept the law with regard to the purchase of untaxed alcohol or have they suffered in consequence of laxness and failure to understand? Is the later and more difficult Harrison Law understood and obeyed?

The enumeration of topics of interest might continue *ad infinitum* but these are sufficient to point out the possibilities for the development of this department.

It now remains to secure the coöperation of hospital superintendents, who are an exceedingly busy class but who are learning that the old order of hospital administration is being replaced by a more reasonable one. It is no longer considered necessary nor right that the superintendent should be the only individual on the hospital premises who is thoroughly conversant with the details of management, but the woman superintendent has taken a leaf from the book of her brother, the man superintendent, and has decided that she also will have an understudy who shall do her work in her absence and to whom shall be delegated from time to time certain routine duties. It has cost the superintendent a pang to part with any fractional part of her beloved work, but she has learned that in this way, only, can she secure the time needed for rest and mental refreshment as well as for communicating to others what she has gained by long experience and arduous toil. It is from such women that this department hopes to hear in the near future.

This new field of usefulness to the JOURNAL and its readers is a wide one, the opportunities for honorable and consecrated service are great and it remains to be proved whether the particular powers and aptitudes required shall be granted for the realization of the best results. Surely if it is to be developed to the highest standard it must have the best from those who represent its particular branch of work. The question is not, what or where is the best but how to acquire it, how to draw it out? Who among hospital administrators or managers will be willing to give of that best which is certainly in them? It is said that problems of organization, administration and sanitary regulation challenge the highest abilities in a woman and the discipline obtained in solving them trains desirable forces. It is upon these forces that this department must now depend.

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES AND THE ROBB MEMORIAL FUND

There seems to be a misunderstanding on the part of a few public health nurses (and we fear that others may share it) that public health nurses are not eligible to the benefits of the Robb Memorial Scholarship Fund. We are anxious to have them clearly understand that ever since there has been a post-graduate course in public health nursing, public health nurses have had a generous share in the awards and there is every possible claim upon public health nurses to give liberally to the fund as well as to consider it a great privilege to honor Mrs. Robb by doing so.

ELLA PHILLIPS CRANDALL.